

Several minutes later the blue-wing landed in front of me and I turned and saw close-by what I first mistook for a muskrat. Three male red-winged blackbirds were dive-bombing it though, so I took a closer look with a telescope. It was a mink and it was dragging a female blue-winged teal through the water! Her neck was underwater and the right wing was flapped up partially covering the mink's back. I kept on watching them.

The male blue-winged teal skittered along in front of the mink, making no noise and soon disappeared. The red-winged blackbirds gave up the chase too. Old mink just kept on swimming, making a bee-line for the opposite shore and shifted its load once or twice. A curious male ring-necked duck followed the mink at a discrete distance until the mink gained shore and was lost to view. The "ringneck" swam for 50 yards or so along the shore then, which may indicate that the mink carried the duck along the shore for a good distance.

So ends the saga of the mink and the duck. Conservation officers were unable to apprehend the illegal hunter. However, the chances of proving the hunter's identity in court were considered to be very low.

To conclude in a serious vein, mink have been observed taking ducks before, but it is unusual. A mink's diet usually consists of small mammals such as mice and young muskrats; fish and frogs.

- Rosemary Curley  
Fish & Wildlife Division

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#### Goshawk Thwarted in Attempt to Secure Blue-winged Teal for Lunch

I have a special location where I can retreat to catch a trout, shoot a duck or trap a muskrat, but, more importantly, an area where I can sit and observe the functioning of a fresh-water marsh. A couple of days after hunting season had opened a friend and I arrived early and set up our decoys. About an hour after sunrise the monotony of the wait was shattered by two blue-winged teal calling loudly and approaching the blind. The teal were flying low over the water with a goshawk in hot pursuit. When the teal were about 30 yards from us they frantically dove into the water and remained completely submerged for several seconds. The goshawk circled and when the teal emerged he made another pass over them causing them to dive again. The hawk then perched on a dead tree and after examining our blind for a short time flew silently about five feet over our heads. He again returned to the tree but made no further attempts to molest the ducks which disappeared into the cattails calling vigorously. The goshawk remained perched for a couple of minutes and then quietly disappeared across the pond.

- Daryl Guignion  
Biology Department  
Univ. of P.E.I.

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#### The Fox in Autumn

At this time of year, the red fox family is beginning to break up as the young are mature enough to fend for themselves. Young foxes move from their denning areas to set up their own winter territories (hunting areas). Generally young males will move further from the rearing area than females. The average distance that young move is thought to be about 43 miles but in agricultural areas such as Prince Edward Island which provide more food and other necessities of life, the distance is probably less than half the usual.

Autumn, the season of change, brings a change too in the diet of a fox. The summer diet of insects, berries and other vegetable matter is being replaced by a meat diet. Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island have shown that foxes here exist largely on mice and domestic animal remains during winter. Contrary to popular belief, foxes do not rely on snowshoe hare (rabbits) for their main food source. They do eat a few, however.

In autumn, foxes take on a heavier coat in preparation for winter. They make little use of dens until the breeding season in January and February.

- Rosemary Curley  
Fish & Wildlife Division